"Mis' Brennan's Kid"

By... Ceceily Allen

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The entire neighborhood had long since decided that Mrs. Brennan's youngest hopeful would close his earthly career through the unwelcome attentions of the proverbial hangman. Maggie Brennan, aged fifteen, was a popular employee at Johnson's cigar factory. Young Dan was a district messenger boy, and even little Jennie earned old pennies by caring for the neighbors' children when the latter were called away to christenings, funerals and weddings.

But from the day that the "Kid," at the tender age of nine months, had fallen from the fire escape to the areaway, striking three clotheslines en route, and had sat up, howling vigorously, but unhurt, his young life had been marked by a succession of stirring and nerve distracting events. Even his good natured Irish mother had begun to regard him as hopeless, and his one friend was pretty Miss Harris, whose pink and blue shirt waists and daintily embroidered skirts decorated the Brennan clothes horse each ironing day. Meta Harris always declared that the "Kid" was particularly intelligent and some day would perform a great deed.

On this afternoon the "Kid," having reached the age of three and having acquired sufficient wisdom to snatch a stick of licorice from a weaker and meeker playmate in the gutter, had wandered far from home.

An overdose of licorice on this hot, sultry day had affected the "Kid" as nothing had ever done before. He yearned for the narrow, dim court and the towering tenement, to say nothing of a drink and his mother's restful bosom. But all around him was mud, the thick, yellow mud of a newly opened street, and beyond disgustingly new cottages painted in æsthetic tints and surrounded by gardens laid out in geometrical flower and lawn patterns—that is, all were thus laid out save one. It was overgrown with weeds, which had choked out the flowers planted there early in the spring.

A young man in a natty flannel suit had paused at the gate and was surveying with a clouded brow the scene of desolation. It hardly seemed possible that just four months previous he and she had planted those flowers, coming up each evening to water them, pick out the weeds and put finishing touches within doors.

The parlor furniture had been put in place. Even some of the shining tinware had found its way to the small pantry when the quarrel came.

He had done his best to smooth over the difficulty, but finally one afternoon he had walked over to the little cottage, which represented his savings of two hard years, closed and barred the windows and doors and with a heavy heart had walked out through the small gate. Never again had he been near the burial ground of his high hopes until this evening. Vaguely he had felt lately that something ought to be done with the place.

The frown deepened as he turned away and marched resolutely down the street. He would see a real estate man at once and offer the place at any sacrifice. Then he'd try his luck in South America. The papers all said there were great openings down there for clever fellows from the States.

"Mamma! Ma"—

Jack Griswold stopped communing with the disagreeable past and stared down upon a bedraggled, forlorn bit of humanity.

"Hello, old chap! Are you black or white?"

The "old chap" resented the familiar address, fell to weeping lustily and rolled disconsolately in the soft mud.

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Jack, bending over the little fellow, "you mustn't do that! You'll be a sight. Guess you're lost."

Griswold glanced helplessly at the neat cottages and then at the child of the slums. How ever did the youngster get way out here? And his sobs were actually pitiful. Jack thought of a policeman, but such officials were seldom needed in this quiet neighborhood.

Finally pity overcame discretion, and Jack grasped a small hand and led the runaway toward the cottage over which he had but lately been gloating in misery. He unlocked the door and led the culprit to the kitchen, turned on the water and awkwardly washed the astonished denizen of Diggle's court.

"There! When I get a few layers of dirt off I'll take you to the nearest police station, and they can locate your ma. But I'll be hanged if I'd drag such a connecting link as you were through the streets."

A fresh handkerchief was sacrificed on the altar of cleanliness, and then Griswold started toward the door with his unexpected charge. But here another surprise was in store for him. The skies were overcast, and lightning was playing along the horizon. There was nothing to do but wait till the storm passed by.

Griswold sank into a rocker in the tiny parlor, and "Mis' Brennan's Kid" clambered familiarly upon his knee. The afternoon was sultry, the little head sank lower and lower on Griswold's immaculate flannel suit, and soon a soft, even breathing filled the quiet room.

The storm gathered and burst, but the child slept on, and Griswold, with half closed eyes, lived over again the happy days when he and she had planned and furnished the cottage.

A sudden flash of vivid lightning and a shrill feminine shriek.

"Oh, Mrs. Brennan, if only I had a key we could get in here! And porches and trees are so dangerous!"

Jack rose to his feet, the sleeping child still clasped in his arms. There was no mistaking that voice. For an instant he hesitated, then threw open the door.

Two women crouched in the portal. One was middle aged and haggard, her sleeves rolled up to her elbow and her apron tossed over her head. The other was young and dainty and fair to look upon even in her tearful fright. They rose and faced the sudden vision in the doorway.

The older woman gave a scream, half of anger, half of joy.

"It's me Kid! Where did ye foind him?" Then, without waiting for reply, she jerked the sleeping child from Griswold's arms and fell to weeping and scolding over him in true Irish fashion.

Ten minutes later the storm died down as suddenly as it had risen, and Mrs. Brennan and her "Kid," duly provided with car fare, were wending their way toward the nearest trolley line.

The younger woman still stood at the window, staring out upon the weeds which hung heavy with moisture. She tapped her fingers mechanically on the window pane.

"I had gone over to Mrs. Brennan's for a shirt waist I needed," she remarked suddenly, as if she felt that an explanation was obligatory, "and she was nearly crazy about the 'Kid.' I felt so sorry for her, and we kept walking and walking, and every one had seen the little boy, they said, and we followed the trail till we got here—and"—

She turned suddenly and faced Griswold, who was regarding her anxiously. The contrast between his grave, pleading face and his generally demoralized attire was ludicrous. The departing "Kid" had left as mementos of his short stay liberal stains of licorice and mud on Griswold's soft flannel suit. One grimy hand had evidently found a resting place on Jack's smooth shaven cheek.

Meta Harris stopped laughing and exclaimed:

"Oh, to think you'd be so good to that miserable 'Kid.' You've made me feel so—so mean and insignificant." Her face was very sober now. "Do you think, Jack, you could forgive me, and"—

"Bless that 'Kid!'" exclaimed Jack as they walked home in the twilight. Meta had resolutely refused to board a trolley car in consideration of Jack's soiled raiment. "When we get settled, the little chap can play up here every Saturday."

"Yes," mused Meta, "I always said that boy would do something worth while."

California Humming Bird.

The nest is about the size of half the shell of a common duck's egg and is made of plant down and cobwebs, with a slight outside garniture of moss, being a much less compact and interesting structure than that of the eastern ruby throat. It is placed on a twig of a cork elm, a little too high to be looked into from the piazza, and in all probability is kept in its precarious position—for the twig upon which it rests is no thicker than an ordinary lead pencil—by a glutinous substance collected by the bird from the honey bearing flowers which it visits in securing food.

The little occupant—a somewhat smaller bird than the female ruby throat—allows herself to be observed from the distance of four or five feet, though her attitude is one of great alertness, and any sudden movement on the part of her observer will immediately send her off. There is something in the position of the eye, so far up in the head, in the long and very slightly curved bill and in the short up flirted tail as she sits rather high in her tiny nest that is suggestive of a pygmy woodcock.—Independent.

Walnut Grain.

In order to imitate walnut grain rub down the article to be stained without oil, then charge a sponge with potassium permanganate and squeeze it out again until nearly dry. With this dab the wood, using something to protect the hands while doing it to prevent their being dyed brown. Next saturate with alkanna root oil and polish lightly. Follow with another dabbing with a well squeezed out sponge previously saturated with a filtered solution of best bismarck brown in spirit. When this has dried for a short time, continue the polishing, sprinkling on a little pumice stone and dabbing where necessary with the sponges, as explained above. The process will produce a handsome graining.

Why Eyes Are Light and Dark.

An interesting point is the cause of the different shades of color we see in the eyes. On a certain membrane in the interior are numerous cells called "pigment" cells. When these are present in very great numbers, they produce that deep black color of some eyes and in proportion to their numbers decrease also the depth of color till finally a light blue is reached. In certain eyes these pigment cells do not exist at all, being wanting, indeed, all through the system, hair and skin. A person of this description is called an albino, and among animals we find a parallel in the case of the white rabbit.—Chambers' Journal.

Gentle, Yet Severe.

"My ancestors," said Willie Wishington, "moved in the very best society."

"I don't doubt it," answered Miss Cayenne a little wearily. "But the best society doesn't necessarily make the best company."—Washington Star.

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METAPHOR OF THE SEA.

Terms Associated With the Water That Are Very Expressive.

"Let me put in my oar," said a gentleman as he joined three of his acquaintances in the hotel cafe the other night and took a seat at a table with them.

"That is about the twentieth metaphor of that sort that I have heard to night," answered one of the others, "and it seems so strange that we should borrow so many of our figures from the sea. I never thought of it before, but it is curious. I have never been closely associated with the water, and I don't believe any of us have, and yet we are using sea terms all of the time. They are wonderfully expressive, too, and I don't know what we would do without them.

"You want to put in 'your oar,' a moment ago some one talked about being 'all adrift,' and I admitted that I was 'at sea.' We talk about our 'weather eye,' being 'spliced,' our 'mainstay' and all that sort of stuff. We know what it is to 'cast an anchor to windward,' to 'back and fill,' to 'steer' through, to be 'taken aback' and to have 'the wind taken out of our sails.'

"We 'spin a yarn,' try 'the other tack,' 'launch' enterprises, get them 'under full sail' and often 'wreck' them. We cry for 'any port in a storm,' 'take in a reef,' get to our 'rope's end,' 'run before the wind' and sometimes 'keel over.' So it goes on until I believe we can talk about almost everything in the language of the sea."—St. Louis Republic.

Choosing a Minister.

The parish kirk of Drieehton had been rather unfortunate in its ministers, two of them having gone off in decline within a twelvemonth of their appointment, and now, after hearing a number of candidates for the vacancy, the members were looking forward with keen interest to the meeting at which the election of the new minister was to take place.

"Weel, Marget," asked one female parishioner of another as they foregathered on the road one day, "wha are you gaun to vote for?"

"I'm just thinkin' I'll vote for none o' them. I'm no' muckle o' a judge, an' it'll be the safest plan," was Marget's sagacious reply.

"Toots, woman, if that's the way o't, vote wi' me."

"An' hoo are you gaun to vote?"

"I'm gaun to vote for the man that I think has the soundest lungs an' 'll no' bother us wi' deein' again in a hurry."—Scottish American.

An Odd Dish.

Mix boiled hog's lard and milk with thick gruel. Stir it well together, with fresh cheese, yolks of eggs and brains. Wrap it in a fragrant fig leaf and boil in the gravy of a chicken or a kid. When taken out, remove the leaf and souse it in a potful of boiling honey. The name of this comestible is derived from the fig leaf, but the mixture consists of equal parts of each, but rather more eggs, because this gives it consistency. This appears to have been a popular dish among the Greeks. To us it seems about as nice as an oyster eaten with brown sugar.

Aristophanes mentions a thirum of salt fish and a thirum of fat. In the "Frogs" there is a dismal joke in the form of a reasonable objection made to leaping from a lofty tower, "I would lose two fig leaves of brain." The word occurs no less than twelve times in the fragments of the comic poets.

The Cobweb.

A story was told the other day of a little girl who discovered a cobweb and then, seeing a spider emerge from it, called out: "See the cob run! How fast the cob runs!" As a matter of fact she builded better than she knew, for cob, or cop, is, according to the dictionaries, the name sometimes given to a spider; whence the word cobweb, which is, strictly speaking, copweb. Cop in this sense is probably an abbreviation of the Anglo-Saxon attercoppe, a spider.

Odd Records.

Records are kept with knotted cords in Polynesia. During the early part of the nineteenth century and previously the official taxgatherers on the island of Hawaii, in the Sandwich group, did all their accounts on a rope 2,400 feet long, which was divided into lengths, each corresponding to a district. Loops, knots and feathers tied along the rope served as memoranda for the hogs, pigs and pieces of sandalwood collected from taxpayers.

Language.

"It's wonderful," said the meditative man, "how one small word, insignificant in itself, may induce an endless train of thought, speaking volumes, in fact."

"Yes," replied the caustic man. "Take the word 'but,' for instance, when a woman says, 'Of course, it's none of my business, but.'"—Exchange.

The Use of Bread on Water.

A loaf of bread is a favorite talisman for locating a drowned body in most European countries. Sometimes it is found sufficient of itself, sometimes it needs the aid of some other substance. Thus in England the loaf is usually weighted with quicksilver.—Notes and Queries.

A Little Rough on Ma.

Daughter—The man I marry must be a brave man.

Father—He will be if he marries you while your mother is living.—New York Press.

He Is No Hypocrite.

Tom—Are you going to wear mourning for your wealthy uncle?

Jack—Only a black pocketbook.—Chicago News.

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